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ABSTRACT

In the spirit of educational reform efforts, this paper describes a supervisory training program at Indiana University East. The program, based on the development of reflective skills, is designed to assist classroom teachers who become supervisors for early education field students and student teachers. In order to develop the skills of a good supervisor, the training is centered around communication, setting a vision, observing, conferencing, and self-knowledge. Each of these areas is addressed through a 15-hour training program utilizing discussion, group work, and role playing. To understand the linkage between school improvement, reform, and the supervision training program, this paper reviews reform efforts in schools and takes a concentrated look at the key elements of this training program. The training has helped build a pool of qualified teacher supervisors whose skills in supervision lend themselves to being effective and helpful in achieving effective school reform. (LL)

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KEY SUPERVISION SKILLS THAT WILL TOUCH THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL REFORM

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KEY SUPERVISION SKILLS THAT WILL TOUCH THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL REFORM

Reform in schools is not a new idea; in fact, it could easily be said that reform is an item on the agenda that has preoccupied each generation through time. In the 90's educators are once again faced with reform, or in this generation's preferred word, "restructuring." Whatever the word, the need for continued improvement in the performance of educational institutions cannot be denied. It may even be argued that the very future of human kind rests with the ability of education to be continually reformed and improved. Thus, reform and restructure are not new and we in education are in the midst of yet another wave that has great potential.

This wave will only have lasting effects if the process as well as the content of education are reviewed. It might be said that educators swing from the current fad to the next and that the pendulum swings back and

forth between various schools of thoughts that periodically take on new labels and names. While the swings may be true, this present effort at restructuring and reform is much needed. Only a blind person could not see the needs. But the reforms will be a bandaid if the result is only the ability of new curriculum content areas to win out for the day. It will be lasting if the people involved develop new skills that will enable the process of reflection and improvement to be ongoing and developing. Dewey's premise that being reflective is critical to education is the corner stone for this ongoing need. The ability to be reflective, however, requires certain special skills inherent in every person but not often developed, used, or focused on the necessary areas for reform. These skills are not necessarily related to the development of new courses, teaching techniques, or curriculum ideas and schools of thoughts. These skills are related to empowerment and the development of each teacher/educator into a yet to be labeled role, that at this time comes closest to being found in the label of leader.

At Indiana University East in Richmond, Indiana there has been a supervision training program designed to assist classroom teachers who become supervisors for education field students. Significantly based on the need to be reflective, the goal is to assist the teachers in becoming good supervisors and leaders for the early field students and student teachers. In order to develop the skills of a good supervisor the training develops skills centered around communication, setting a vision, observing and conferencing, and self knowledge. Each of these areas is addressed through a fifteen hour training program that uses discussion, group work, role playing and approaches that are based on the research of Gardner's seven intelligences. (Gardner, 1983 and Lazear, 1991) Feedback from the

participants has been very impressive and has indicated that they feel the training has prepared them to work effectively with students; moreover, it has helped them become more active members of the various school reform activities occurring in their individual buildings.

In order to understand the linkage between school improvement, reform and the supervision training program, this paper will briefly review the reform restructuring efforts afoot in schools and then take a more concentrated look at the key elements of the supervision training program at Indiana University East.

Reform

Reform in schools seems inevitable. Although some educators are reluctant to hear the drums they are growing louder and louder. "Educators must recognize that more and more people are distressed about the quality of education and unwilling to keep on supporting the present structure." (Brandt, 1991) Educators may not be as unwilling to hear the need as they may be overwhelmed by the details and the many pressures and problems. They may also be afraid and lack the necessary skills for true and lasting change to happen.

True change will come when the culture of each institution reflects what professional educators know about learning and teaching. Without this kind of change, educators will forever be instituting innovation-for-its-own-sake. (Slavin, 1989). Educators need the courage to "do the right thing" for the students. (Glikman, 1991) It is not necessary to do things right as established by some outside authority or pressure group. It is necessary to develop the skills of each person in the school culture so that the corporate educational culture is focused on the central mission of creating the most

positive learning for all involved in the culture. This cultural aspect of change is address in various ways by leading thinkers and researchers in leadership and business. (Deal, 1983, Kanter, 1983, Bennis, 1985) These researchers call for organizational cultures that are created by people who have the very skills being addressed in the supervision training program at Indiana University East.

In education our focus has often been on details, on the specifics in special curriculum areas, on the techniques to solve discipline, and on the technical aspects of the art of teaching. These are important elements but in the effort to teach effectiveness we often fail to teach the skills necessary to the process of becoming an educational artist. In a small way, the program at Indiana University East attempts to address some of the skills that seem critical to effective and long lasting change in the process.

In the supervision training program and in this paper the "right things to do" will not be specifically discussed. This will not be done, in part, because others who see their role as the bringer of the sacred message do this often; and, in part, because time changes what is "right." Effective reform movements need to establish a process in each school so that the "right things" will always be changing based on the present needs of the members of that community. As a consequence the supervision training is not a program that dictates the outcome. It is a program that stresses some of the skills necessary to create a dynamic culture and that are important to effective restructuring. These skills are necessary for the national education reform process to be in place and to be effective. The skills seem to be corner stones but they do not represent an exhaustive list. In the remaining portions of this paper those key skills will be briefly discussed.

They are centered around communication, setting a vision, observing, and self knowledge.

Communication

Effective communication is a skill often needed by teachers. While teachers communicate often with parents, supervisors, peers and others, their professional communication is usually with younger people, their students. Communication with adults is sometimes different and is a critical skill. We review this important area as it relates to effective supervision. The session covers the importance of nonverbal communication and then reviews the various blocks in verbal communication. The participants are asked to do different role playing activities to practice "I message" communication skills and active listening. The teachers who participate almost always articulate that this is an important skill in dealing with field students. It is also interesting that in every session examples are brought up that deal with personal communication issues and the ever present professional communication issue of dealing with a co-worker. Teachers and educators confirm that communication is a key aspect of their profession. It is also an area that causes many problems and is forever in need of improvement and attention. This is a constant surprise and dawning awareness from the participants.

Communication is also important to the present school reform movement which finds itself immersed in group work, committees and site-based teams working together to effect change. The effective work of the restructuring movement will rest with the development of this skill and the ongoing work of individual school communities to improve and work on

this area. The teachers who have participated in the training have stated that it has helped them by reminding them of important skills. They have also indicated that the site based teams with whom many are working are going to review communication skills and perhaps bring in someone to work with the team. This is a most important skill; it is one that needs attention any time a team comes together to work.

School reform of the 90's is based on collaborative teams of educators who will work toward creating a positive learning environment for all. It should not be presumed that all adults or all professionals are capable of working in teams, nor should it be assumed that they are good communicators. Groups do not automatically know how to work as a group. One of the premises of collaborative groups in schools is that working together needs to be taught.(Johnson and Johnson, 1982) For groups to work together the ability to be effective communicators and listeners is needed. This training addresses that need and in preparing teachers to supervise students by working on communication skills the training is also helping to develop a skill that is a key for lasting reform.

Setting a vision

While it is important to be able to communicate, there needs to be something to communicate. In this part of the training we concentrate on remembering what is effective and positive learning and then look at some of the data that appears to represent major forces shaping the future of education. This information is critical for supervision and perhaps even more important for school reform. If we do not know where we are going, it will be very hard to get there and very hard to train others. This area is one that the teachers find most interesting and engaging. Teachers do not

seem to have the time to stop and reflect on the purpose and goals of education. This gives them a little time and practice, and in the discussion with others they make important connections. The training does not provide an opportunity to reach an end conclusion. In fact an end conclusion isolated from the teams and communities of each of their schools does not make sense. However, the awakening experience of dreaming is important. It is also important to note that the multiintelligence exercises produce very similar lists of characteristics of remembered positive learning experiences. The list is not a surprise in itself; it just represents many things we know but do not always find in schools. The list comes from many experiences (if not a majority) that are outside traditional educational settings. This represents an important piece of information flowing from this training program. The experiences of looking for a vision for education and talking about it with peers is often said to be one of the best aspects of the training.

For school reform to occur, teachers need an opportunity to explore the future and then come to a common statement about their own direction and goals. In discussing transformational leadership, Tichy and Devanna (1986) state that leaders need "a new vision, new frames of thinking about strategy, structure and people." The need for a vision of what can be is extremely important to dynamic and effective institutions (Bennis, 1985, Kanter, 1983, Burns, 1978). Bennis (1985) states that nothing serves an organization better than leadership which "knows what it wants...." and that it flows from a vision of what can be. If school reform is to have lasting effects, or rather if the present reform movement is to be effective, the participants must have a clear vision of what can be. William Ouchi (1981) states that a shared and common vision provides an important focus

and purpose for an organization. These leadership theorists are pointing to a critical element for effective restructuring in schools. There must be a clear vision and it must be shared.

Lezotte (1991), in a recent lecture at Indiana University East, stated that educators too often do not know where they are going and the first step needed in restructuring is to establish a clear vision. The experience provided to the teachers in the training program awakens this ability and plants the seed for future discussions about the vision for education in general and for their individual perspective building communities. It is critical as this reform movement progresses that educators take the time to establish a common vision of what can be before various actions and plans are put in place. The training begins that process and was highly valued by the participating teachers.

Observation

Having the skills to communicate and knowing where we are going are important but teachers also need to be able to observe, collect data, conference with an adult and ask reflective questions. These specific skills are reviewed during the training. These central areas to effective supervision of practice teaching are reviewed through role playing, video observations and coaching. These skills are also critical to school reform. If teachers own the profession, then improving the quality of teaching is an important area that must be addressed. The skills explored in this portion of the training can be used to help mentor younger teachers as well as veteran teachers. They can also be used to build effective teams of teachers who know how to provide each other with the data and the questions needed to stimulate growth and reach for new goals.

Observation is a skill that, like others, is improved with practice. The critical element is that the training helps teachers develop the ability to see and gather data that is as free from judgments as can be made. It is then that the data can be used by the observed to develop future goals and striving for growth in particular areas. During the workshop data collecting is practiced and then is used in a practice conference. It becomes obvious to the participants that the supervisor needs to step back and not become the problem solver. The practice teacher will make the most growth if the goals are a result of data, questions and reflections rather than as a result of direct instruction from the supervisors. The teachers practice these skills and find the practice important and, as one recently stated, "hard to do." They come to value the experience, however, and state that it will be helpful as their schools move more and more to team work, teacher mentoring and peer coaching.

This part of the training at Indiana University East addresses the most specific skills for supervising practice teachers. It is important for their development but these skills will increasingly be valued in restructuring as teachers are more empowered and are making instructional decisions. These skills will enable them to create an "ethic of creation" rather than an ethic of competition. This ethic according to Deal and Kennedy (1982) is key to an organizational culture that promotes self responsibility and risk taking. If educators help each other to improve instruction by using the observation and conferencing skills reviewed in this training, they could help promote an environment not threatened by evaluation and competition, but one moving toward a goal of constant improvement and support. The training is a beginning of these much needed skills in this area.

Self Knowledge

Finally, effective supervision comes best from those who clearly are life-long learners who have some sense of who they are. During the training the participants take various assessment tools that are scored and discussed. The participants take the Gregoric learning style inventory, the Myers-Briggs personality test and a philosophy survey test. These tools are just that -- tools. There is no intense commitment to these instruments; they are, however, a place for the teachers to begin reflecting on who they are. The point is that the more self knowledge and understanding they possess, the more effective leadership and supervision they can provide. It is also true that more self knowledge and understanding helps one understand motives and actions of oneself and others.

Perhaps inherent in the present reform movement, that is so strongly connected to empowerment, is the implication of self knowledge and the willingness to constantly be developing and growing. The various aspects of reform already mentioned call for people who are comfortable with who they are and who are willing to take risks in an effort to improve individually as well as to improve the corporate educational organizations. The first self evident step is to know who I am. The supervision training provides the first steps. This area is also highly valued by the participants and produces some very good discussions. The teachers often state that it helps to reflect on who they are and to review the literature regarding how others function. The lightbulb seems to come on frequently in these sessions as they remember something they did or some action of another. True insights stem from knowing about how styles, personalities and beliefs affect an individual. This understanding is a helpful tool for school

reform because people from different backgrounds, styles, personalities and beliefs are called upon to work together.

Conclusion

The training at I.U. East has been well received. It has helped build a pool of very qualified teacher supervisors whose skills in supervision also lend themselves to being effective and helpful in achieving effective school reform. Reform efforts depend on educators who communicate with each other, who see a vision of what can be, who observe and conference with each other to build on strengths, who are knowledgeable about who they are and who are comfortable in seeking growth and improvement. These teacher educators will have the skills to build an open culture based on an ethic of creating and caring that will promote lasting reform and improvement. The training program at Indiana University East is an attempt that is evolving. It addresses the needs of our education students and supports the larger need for action and reform in our schools.

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